

Equestrian Bio



Born and raised in Los Angeles, Kathy Matthes developed a life-long passion for horses with her first Griffith Park Pony Ride at age 3. “I remember wailing in terror the first time I sat on a horse, but by the time I was led around the pony ring once, I was hooked,” she recalls. “After that, I read every horse book I could get my hands on and rode as much as possible during my childhood.”



After completing a B.A. in Humanities at CSUN, she decided to study horsemanship in 1984 at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center's Riding School. Kathy earned her Hunter/Jumper lessons as a working student; she spent evenings and weekends taking lessons and honing her stable management skills, while also working full-time at USC.



Her dedication and talent earned her a coveted spot in the Apprentice Instructors Program, where she was required to pass written, oral and riding tests before advancing to the next level. All of her assigned project horses were schooled, competed and ultimately purchased by riding school students.

Kathy supplemented this training with Horse Science courses at L.A. Pierce College, where she made the Dean's List. She began teaching Hunt Seat at the riding school in 1986.



When Traditional Equitation School (T.E.S.) purchased the LAEC Riding School in 1986, Kathy continued on as a working student and Hunt Seat instructor. With T.E.S., came Van Dahn International, Lilian Van Dahn, and a host of yearly exchange instructors from the world-reknown Swedish riding academy, Strömsholm.

Fascinated by her first real exposure to classical dressage, Kathy took dressage lessons, attended instructor clinics with visiting Strömsholm director, Bo Tibblin, and competed in and scribed at dressage shows. She soon began teaching dressage and coaching her students at dressage shows.

“Lilian Van Dahn taught me that there is no room for ego or personal ambition in classical dressage because the welfare of the horse always comes first,” recalls Kathy. “She ignited in me a deep passion and profound respect for the art, science and philosophy of dressage.”



Although Kathy enjoyed riding, she had found her calling as an instructor. Passionate about rider education, Kathy worked closely with T.E.S. school director Sherry Doyle-Murphy in 1989-90 to create the T.E.S. Horsemastership Lecture Series and Certificate Program. She compiled the T.E.S. instructor and working student manuals and reorganized the riding class levels and their progressive skill requirements.



During this time, Kathy also developed and taught show prep clinics, established and published a monthly T.E.S. newsletter, compiled several student guidebooks, and published articles in *Horse Illustrated* and *Horse Play* magazines.



Since Kathy loved both dressage and jumping, it was only a matter of time before she became interested in Three-Day Eventing (Combined Training). She worked with Sherri Doyle-Murphy to establish an Eventing program at T.E.S. and eventually taught Combined Training classes.



When Anne Howard (daughter of Dressage Olympic Gold Medalist Sandy Howard) joined T.E.S. as an instructor while in Los Angeles completing her physical therapy degree at USC, Anne's combined training experience enabled Kathy to expand the combined training offerings at T.E.S.

Kathy established and directed the T.E.S. Combined Training Club with Anne, who was the training director, and student Melinda Hallmark, who was the Club's secretary. The Club provided cross-country schooling days, show scholarships, an event groom certificate program, a monthly newsletter, meetings and clinics, and an annual awards banquet. When Anne graduated from USC, Leslie Morse took over as training director.

During a visit to Anne and Sandy Howard's in Santa Cruz for a weekend of CT training at the Pebble Beach cross-country course, Kathy heard about a new system of teaching developed by British instructor, Mary Wanless. Based on physics, body mechanics, kinesiology, educational psychology, sports psychology, and the classical principles of dressage, Mary's interactive (and controversial) method of teaching combined a new riding science with the art of teaching.



Wanless' ideas intrigued Kathy, who was by then completing a Masters of Science in Education at USC in Instructional Technology (art and science of designing instruction). This weekend radically changed Kathy's approach to teaching. She became fascinated by the teaching and learning process, interactive teaching methods and riding sciences, which she incorporated into her lessons.



In July 1999, Kathy left USC to teach riding full-time at T.E.S. During this time, she also designed and authored the T.E.S. website and enabled T.E.S. to become the first British Horse Society (BHS) Approved Riding Establishment on the West Coast. She worked with BHSII-level instructor, Diane Slater, to create the BHS training program at T.E.S. Kathy also organized and managed the BHS certification visits from England by Islay Auty, who offered riding clinics and the BHS tests to candidates in the BHS program.

When a student abandoned his eight-year-old, bay Thoroughbred (left), Kathy rescued the horse and reschooled him. He is living happily with his new owner.

Kathy left T.E.S. in 2001 to pursue a college teaching career.

Equestrian Publications

TESTALK Newsletter

- [February 1998](#)
- [April 1998](#)
- [May 1998](#)
- [June 1998](#)
- [July/Aug 1998](#)
- [September 1998](#)
- [December 1998](#)
- [February 1999](#)
- [May 1999](#)
- [June/July 1999](#)

TESCTC Eventer Newsletter

- [August 1991](#)
- [Spring 1992](#)
- [January 1994](#)

Educational Program Guides

- [ShowTime Guide](#)
- [TES New Student Guide](#)
- [TESCTC Membership Handbook](#)